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SUBJECT: BAYELSA DEPUTY SWORN IN AS NEW GOVERNOR

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for Reason 1.4 (D)

1. (U) Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State under Governor Alamieyeseigha and acting Governor since Alamieyeseigha's impeachment, was sworn in as Bayelsa Governor on December 12. Jonathan will complete the remaining fifteen months of the current term.

2. (U) The new Governor praised the Assembly and Federal Government for maintaining security without declaring a state of emergency, a reference to the deployment of troops as tensions heightened immediately following Alamieyeseigha's return. Jonathan also described the saga of Alamieyeseigha's arrest, flight from the UK, and impeachment as a test of the integrity of the people of Bayelsa State and the entire Ijaw nation.

3. (C) Comment: During the nearly three months of the Alamieyeseigha saga, Jonathan walked a tightrope. He could not boldly seek to replace the former governor, for risk of being attacked by Alamieyeseigha's supporters. However, he also had to appear responsive when the federal government pushed for Alamieyeseigha's quick ouster lest Jonathan incur Abuja's ire. There were some moments when Jonathan appeared to be confused, between and betwixt. In the end, all he had to do was bide his time and hide behind the federal coattails, since President Obasanjo was bent on Alamieyeseigha's impeachment. At that point, pressure shifted from Jonathan to the State Assembly. Now Jonathan reaps the benefit. However, his honeymoon will be short-lived. Already, those who want to govern Bayelsa in 2007 are seeking how to make sure Jonathan cannot use his abbreviated tenure to secure a political base that would make him the PDP gubernatorial nominee in 2007. End comment.
BROWNE